

## **Effects of Teaching Tourism Vocabulary on Iranian Hotel Management Students' Communication Skills**

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### **Abstract**

English as the most popular international system of communication plays an undeniable role in the communication of various disciplines. Present study followed a quantitative approach. The study involved studying the effects of teaching tourism vocabulary on communication skills of the students of tourism and hotel management. Forty-six students participated in the study. Two groups were formed randomly; experimental and control. They took the PET test. Their scores from the PET test were used to check the homogeneity of the learners and their pretest communication skills score. The learners' communication skills scores were the collection of their listening and speaking scores from the PET test. After the treatment, the learners took the listening and speaking tests from the PET test. Their mean scores were calculated and compared to find any significant difference. The results showed that the experimental group's communication skills outperformed the control group. Moreover, the results of the study showed the importance of teaching vocabulary for improving communication skills of the students.

**Keywords: Communication skills, Tourism, Training in hospitality, Vocabulary teaching.**

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## **1. Introduction**

One of the most important commercial and industrial activities in the world which contributes to the economic, cultural and political progress of many regions is tourism (Kostic Bobanovi & Grzinic, 2011). Related to this, tourism has a major part called the hospitality industry. Quality of service is a measure of how well the level of service provided meets customer expectations. Providing quality service requires constant adaptation to customer expectations. As social beings, humans are constantly communicating and sharing everything from multiple stories to good and bad experiences. The idea that the customer is always right has become common sense. In today's world, this way of thinking is obsolete. The hospitality industry has grown accustomed to putting the customer first. For this reason, the industry has been built from the perspective of developing hospitality products that meet the needs and desires of customers. Being understood by hotel staffs is one of the main desires of tourists. The results of the related studies investigating the concept of quality services based on the ideas obtained from tourists have shown that hotel staffs' communication skills is one of the important elements mentioned by tourists (Lewis & Booms, 1983). Hotel management students do well aware of the need and necessity of communication skill and take many initiatives to develop their communication by watching news channels, movies/videos, reading magazines, newspapers, and few more sources (Pendidikan, 2016). Vocabulary is an important factor in becoming fluent and fluent in any language. Constructing sentences in a second or foreign language using appropriate vocabulary is a constant obstacle for students with limited vocabulary. Present study aimed at investigating the effects of teaching vocabulary on hotel management students' communication skills. Moreover, based on the related literature, oral communication skills which are more important for students of tourism and hospitality include listening and speaking skills. So. The concept of communication skills in the present study was investigated through the students' listening and speaking skills.

## **2. Literature review**

Obtaining knowledge of the English language and being fluent in it is not because it is popular, but because it facilitates communication with

clients around the world, all who wish to achieve something in their chosen field. Being able to speak English is not only an advantage for staying in your current job or getting promoted, it is also seen as a valuable skill among employees. (Desfitranita, 2017). In addition, another factor to emphasize is that most of them have good professional skills and their field of work may not be placed in good companies. Learning English is believed to slightly increase one's chances of getting a job, which is the main need of every individual (Pandey et al., 2014). English is an important aspect in the tourism sector as it allows us to provide the best possible service to foreign tourists who do not speak the local language. In addition, tourism professionals should speak English to make their visits with foreigners more comfortable (Rojas, 2018). Those who need to use English at work for tourism or hospitality purposes should improve their communication skills, fluency and accuracy (Zahedpisheh & Abu Bakar, 2017). This language is taught as a second language in educational institutions different levels, as contacting other people around the world is an essential factor (Seidlhofer, 2005). The proficiencies currently required in the tourism work environment include specific proficiencies. One of the areas of expertise stimulated by higher education is the ability to express yourself fluently in English (Bosch & Jiménez, 2001). On the other hand, an analysis by Prachanant (2012) found that when tourism workers were asked to select the three features of their knowledge of English that they primarily use at work, the results showed that the most relevant features were It showed that providing information was included, followed by providing services and then providing help. In a study on the need for and use of English in the tourism industry conducted by Prachanant (2012), when tourism workers were asked to rate their need for English skills for proper functioning in the workplace, They rated all four language skills, but they could not speak. It turns out that the order of importance is listening, reading, and writing. Among the requirements for providing good service, English appears as a mandatory requirement for communication together with our future customers. Therefore, improving language skills is essential for a successful communication process (Bobanovic & Grzinic, 2011). A study conducted in the tourism labor market in Puerto Lopez, Manabi province, Ecuador, used a survey of a population consisting of five hotel companies and three tourism agencies to examine the English proficiency

of employees in the tourism sector. It was done. Results show that people believe they need to improve and master English to improve their job performance (Yavuz Çetinkaya & Oter, 2016). Vocabulary is the main drawback of learning a new language and it is not an easy task for anyone without intensive practice and effort. Mastering vocabulary is the most boring aspect among students. While grammar has its own set of rules to follow and can be learned and adopted through regular use over a period of time, vocabulary is like the building blocks for mastering any language (Bruton, 2007).

The following research question was investigated in the current study.

RQ1. Does teaching vocabulary have any effect on Iranian hotel management learners' communication skills?

Based on the aforementioned issues, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H01. Teaching vocabulary does not have any effect on Iranian hotel management learners' communication skills.

### **3. Research method**

#### *3.1 Participants*

The participants of this study were 46 students (male and female) of hotel management from one of the colleges of the University of Applied Science in Tehran, Iran. The students' age ranged from 20 to 32. The homogeneity of the participants' proficiency level was determined by The Preliminary English Test (PET) before carrying out the treatment. Two intact classes, taught by the same instructor, were considered as the two groups of the study. There were 23 participants in each of the experimental and control groups. The experimental group (N = 23) learned tourism vocabulary during fourteen sessions and the control group (N = 23) did not receive any explicit vocabulary instruction.

#### *3.2 Instruments*

The Preliminary English Test (PET)

PET results were used as an index to check the homogeneity of the learners. The test has these sections: Reading six parts - 32 questions - 45 minutes, Writing two parts - 45 minutes, Listening four parts - 25 questions - 30 minutes, Speaking - an interview, - four parts - 12-17 minutes. The students received a separate score for each of the four

papers. These four scores were averaged to give every student an overall result for the exam. Furthermore, the students' scores from the listening and speaking section were summed up and used as the students' pretest communication skills scores. At the end of the study to determine the communication skills of the learners, they were given the same PET test speaking and listening sections.

English for International Tourism Series (Vocabulary Source)

Eight units of the English for International Tourism Series (lower-intermediate was selected based on the learner' performance on PET) were selected for the purpose of this study. The English International Tourism book series is a complete collection for people who intend to work in the field of tourism and tourism industry. This series of books from intermediate to upper intermediate levels is published by Pearson Publications and tries to increase the language learner's interest in topics related to tourism and foreign travel. This total can also be useful for people who are active in the tourism industry and give them more ability and mastery. Each level of this book has 10 lessons that deal with the basic and important topics of tourism, including flights, hotels, and related issues. Also, considering that at the end of the book, the text of the audio files has been presented, this collection can be used for self-study or taught in classrooms.

### *3.3. Procedure*

To investigate the research question of the present study, two groups were selected. One was randomly titled as the control group and the other was the experimental group. The participants attended English classes for 90-minute lesson periods, one day a week seven sessions each month. The entire period of the experiment was 2 months. The procedural steps were as follows: forty-six Iranian hotel management students participated in this research from the total population of students (83). The students took PET and based on their scores forty-six students were selected. The selected students' proficiency level was recognized as their proficiency level which was considered for homogenizing the participants of the study and as their pretest communication skills scores. The students were divided into two groups. The experimental and control groups were determined randomly. Eight units of the English for International Tourism Series were selected and taught to the learners of the

experimental group. Based on the purpose of this study, the list of important vocabulary was extracted by the teacher and they were taught explicitly to the students of the experimental group. The same units were taught to the students of the control group, but they did not receive any focused and explicit vocabulary instruction. The treatment lasted about two months. The post-test (the same PET test) was administered immediately after the treatment to diagnose the impact of the given treatment. Statistical analysis was carried out on the gathered data to accept or reject the null hypothesis.

#### 4. Results

Analyzing the mean scores in Table 1 showed that the learners in the control group had improvement from pretest to posttest. This improvement could be due to the natural process of instruction.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Control Group's Pretest and Posttest Communication Skills**

|   | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Pretest Communication Skills Control Group  | 23 | 40.00   | 80.00   | 59.5652 | 11.49239       |
| Posttest Communication Skills Control Group | 23 | 46.00   | 81.00   | 65.0435 | 10.26680       |
| Valid N (list wise)                         | 23 |         |         |         |                |

**Table 2. One-Sample Statistics for Control Group's Pretest and Posttest Communication Skills**

|   | t      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         |
|---|--------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|---------|
|   |        |    |                 |                 | Lower                                     | Upper   |
| Pretest Communication Skills Control Group  | 24.857 | 22 | .000            | 59.56522        | 54.5955                                   | 64.5349 |
| Posttest Communication Skills Control Group | 30.383 | 22 | .000            | 65.04348        | 60.6038                                   | 69.4832 |



Moreover, the results indicated in Tables 2 proved the assumption of the experimental group's communication skills significant development under the positive influence of teaching vocabulary.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Experimental Group's Pretest and Posttest Communication Skills)**

|  | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Pretest Communication Skills Experimental Group  | 23 | 41.00   | 77.00   | 60.5217 | 10.02211       |
| Posttest Communication Skills Experimental Group | 23 | 56.00   | 80.00   | 71.2174 | 7.77500        |
| Valid N (list wise)                              | 23 |         |         |         |                |

**Table 4. One-Sample Statistics for Experimental Group's Pretest and Posttest Communication Skills**

|  | Test Value = 0 |    |                 |                 |   |         |
|--|----------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|---------|
|  | t              | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         |
|  |                |    |                 |                 | Lower                                     | Upper   |
| Pretest Communication Skills Experimental Group  | 28.961         | 22 | .000            | 60.52174        | 56.1879                                   | 64.8556 |
| Posttest Communication Skills Experimental Group | 43.929         | 22 | .000            | 71.21739        | 67.8552                                   | 74.5796 |

The first research question investigated whether there was a difference between the communication skills of the students receiving vocabulary instruction before and after the study. The result of the independent samples test has shown that post-test score of the experimental group (M= 71.21) is statistically higher than the post-score of the control group (M=65.04) (See Tables 5 and 6). Students in the experimental group could have better communication skills due to the effects of vocabulary instruction that they received during the treatment. This finding shows that the teaching vocabulary improves students' communication skills.

**Table 5. Comparing Posttest Mean Scores of both Control and Experimental Groups**

|  | Group | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--|-------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Posttest Communication Skills Control      | 1.00  | 23 | 65.0435 | 10.26680       | 2.14078         |
| Posttest Communication Skills Experimental | 2.00  | 23 | 71.2174 | 7.77500        | 1.62120         |

**Table 6. Independent Samples Test of both Control and Experimental Groups**

|                                       |                             | Independent Samples Test                |      |                              |       |                 |                 |                       |   |         |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
|                                       |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |       |                 |                 |                       |   |         |
|                                       |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df    | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         |
|                                       |                             |   |      |                              |       |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper   |
| Posttest Communication Skills Control | Equal variances assumed     | 1.80                                    | .186 | -2.299                       | 44    | .026            | -6.17391        | 2.68537               | -11.58592                                 | -.76191 |
|                                       | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -2.299                       | 40.99 | .027            | -6.17391        | 2.68537               | -11.59717                                 | -.75066 |

Although, both groups had improvement, but as it is indicated in the tables, the experimental group's improvement was more significant than the control group.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This study had two significant findings. The first result indicated that developing a reliable and practical knowledge of vocabulary is very crucial for EFL learners, especially students of tourism and hospitality. The second finding indicated that students' communication skills was a mandatory requirement for students of tourism and hospitality to communicate successfully with customers and tourist from different countries. These findings are discussed with the results of the studies found in literature. These outcomes were supported by the findings of Prachanant (2012) who maintain that in order to keep an effective communication with foreigners; it is required to have a good level of English. Blue & Harun, (2003) believes that employees who work in the tourism and hospitality industry need to have a good command of



English in their workplace, as English is considered the lingua franca of the twenty-first century. Lingua franca is a language that is used to communicate among different people all over the world. Concerning the use of English, the findings of a study conducted by Kostic Bobanovic and Grzanic (2011) maintain that the use of English in travel agencies and tour operators is frequently, especially writing emails to give information about the services offered or to perform international communication with customers. Especially in companies related to trade, tourism and technology, more and more employees are realizing the importance of English skills. Therefore, these companies need professionals with good English proficiency. With the improvement of urban areas and the development of transportation (Zahedpisheh & Abu Bakar, 2017).

Regarding the obtained results in relation to the research question, the data collected showed that tourism and hotel employees need good English communication skills to provide good service to their customers. This finding was supported by that of Tigua, Lucas, and Azúa (2017) that a good knowledge of English is required for having effective communication with tourists and foreigners. According to the data collected and the results of the literature research that supports them, tourists and hotel employees need to speak sufficient English in order to make them feel comfortable during their stay and to provide them with the best possible service. Must have knowledge. Knowledge of English therefore has a positive effect in all areas of the tourism industry. For this reason, knowledge of English, especially English vocabulary related to the hotel staffs' responsibilities has a positive impact on hotel staffs' effective communication processes with customers.

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